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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO;
AMERICAN FEDERATION OF STATE
COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL EMPLOYEES,
AFL-CIO; et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL
MANAGEMENT, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 3:25-cv-01780-WHA

**DECLARATION OF DR. THOMAS
EVANS**

DECLARATION OF DR. THOMAS EVANS

I, Dr. Thomas Evans, hereby declare as follows:

1. I am a member of AGFE Local 3403, and, until February 18, 2025, I was an employee of the National Science Foundation (NSF). I make this statement based on personal knowledge, information, and belief, and if called as a witness could and would testify competently thereto.

2. I received a Ph.D. in Geography from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1998, after which I spent 26 years working in academia. I began as a post-doctoral fellow at Indiana University, where I advanced through the ranks to become a full Professor with tenure. In 2018, I moved to the University of Arizona, where I was a Professor at the School of Geography, Development & Environment.

3. My research focus was investigating how environmental processes affect people and how human decision-making impacts environmental systems, including research in areas such as environmental decision-making, institutions, governance and natural resource management, food and water security and food systems governance. My work involved complex geographic data analysis, including GPS navigation systems, satellite imagery, and land management systems.

4. As a Professor, I led collaborative, multi-institutional research teams involving faculty, graduate students, and postdocs and served on more than 25 federal review panels, evaluating hundreds of proposals for NSF and other agencies.

5. In 2021, I took a two-year leave from my university to serve as a rotator Program Director at NSF through the Visiting Scientist, Engineer and Educator (VSEE) program. Rotators in the VSEE program are employed at NSF for a limited term before returning to their universities.

6. After that experience, I decided to apply for a full-time position at NSF, and was hired as a permanent-track Program Director at the National Science Foundation on July 30, 2023.

7. The transition to working at NSF was a major decision for me. I wound down my research lab, which required ensuring that students and post-doctoral researchers found other positions. I also relocated my family to Washington, D.C.

8. The commitment letter I received from NSF stated that my employment was subject to a one-year probationary period.

1 9. The Standard Form 50 (SF 50) Notification of Personnel Action form I received at the
2 beginning of my employment listed my tenure status as “Conditional,” which I understood at the time
3 to mean that I was a probationary employee.

4 10. I completed my one-year probationary period on July 30, 2024.

5 11. On July 30, 2024, a subsequent SF-50 was issued to my electronic official personnel
6 folder (eOPF) reflecting the change in my status from “Conditional” to “Permanent” in box 24
7 (“Tenure”) of the form. I therefore understood that I was no longer a probationary employee and that
8 I had full civil service protections in my job.

9 12. On or about February 5, 2025, I became aware that my name was included on a list of
10 probationary employees that had been sent by NSF to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). I
11 reached out to NSF human resources to try to understand why that was the case. Human resources
12 then informed me for the first time that I was considered a probationary employee for two years,
13 despite the documentation I had previously received. No NSF-wide was sent announcing this change
14 to all employees or even to all employees who had likewise been given offer letters stating that they
15 were probationary for only one year.

16 13. As of February 18, 2025, no SF-50 had been uploaded to my eOPF indicating any
17 change in my tenure status from “Permanent.”

18 14. Throughout my total service of 3 years and 6 months at NSF between my term as a
19 rotator and permanent employment, I consistently received performance evaluations of
20 “Outstanding.” Attached hereto as Exhibit A is a true and correct copy of my performance evaluation
21 conducted in April 2024, in which I was rated Outstanding, the highest of five possible levels, in all
22 three performance elements for my position: Program Planning and Management, Programmatic and
23 Scientific Communication, Professional Development. The names of other NSF employees have been
24 redacted.

25 15. In the narrative sections of my April 2024 performance review, my supervisor wrote
26 that:

- 27 • “Tom completes the basic responsibilities of program management, recruiting panelists and
28 ad-hoc reviewers, managing review panels, program budgeting, processing proposals, and

1 coordinating with the other HEGS POs and program support staff on program actions,
2 exceptionally well.”

- 3 • “Tom excelled in his first year as a permanent PO in BCS, having served as a VSEE rotator
4 previously.”
- 5 • “We look forward to Tom’s continued growth as a permanent member of the scientific staff at
6 NSF.”

7 16. As of February 2025, I was serving as a Program Director for NSF programs
8 including: Confronting Hazards, Impacts and Risks for a Resilient Planet; Sustainable Regional
9 Systems Research Networks; Human-Environment and Geographical Sciences Program; and
10 Strengthening American Infrastructure.

11 17. The Confronting Hazards, Impacts and Risks for a Resilient Planet (CHIRRP)
12 Program funds projects designed to advance understanding, forecasting and/or prediction of future
13 Earth system hazards and risks, engage communities in development of research questions and
14 approaches, and produce actionable, science-based solution pathways for adaptation methodologies,
15 products, and services. The CHIRRP program is designed to address hazards compounded by
16 changing climates, rising populations, expanding demands for resources, aging infrastructure, and
17 increasing reliance on technology that are putting the country’s economy, well-being, and national
18 security at risk.

19 18. The Strengthening American Infrastructure (SAI) Program focuses on how
20 fundamental knowledge about human reasoning and decision-making, governance, and social and
21 cultural processes enables the building and maintenance of effective infrastructure that improves lives
22 and society and builds on advances in technology and engineering. SAI funds pathbreaking
23 fundamental research applied to strengthening a specific focal infrastructure.

24 19. I was also one of four Program Directors assigned to a working group at NSF
25 developing funding opportunities to advance interdisciplinary research on the future risks associated
26 with wildland fire. This group included ecologists, atmospheric scientists, and computer scientists,
27 among other fields. I was the only social scientist in the group, and my position was therefore
28

1 particularly important for ensuring that the team considered the critical role human behavior plays in
2 the vulnerabilities and risks associated with wildland fire.

3 20. On the morning of February 18, 2025, I received an email instructing me to attend a
4 meeting with representatives of NSF human resources at 10:00 AM. I attended the hybrid meeting by
5 Zoom.

6 21. At that meeting, representatives of NSF management announced the termination of
7 nearly 170 employees.

8 22. There were numerous technical difficulties with the call. I was able to join at or
9 around 10:06 a.m., but others were continuing to join later. The presenters therefore repeated the
10 termination announcement multiple times over the course of the meeting to inform newly arriving
11 employees what was happening.

12 23. At this February 18, 2025 meeting, NSF confirmed that they considered my
13 employment to be in fact subject to a two-year probation period, contrary to the terms outlined in my
14 offer letter and personnel records.

15 24. For many other employees in a similar situation, this was the first time they became
16 aware that they were not permanent employees. Multiple people asked questions about their SF-
17 50s—which like mine also showed “permanent” tenure status—during the meeting. We were
18 informed that regardless of the statements made by NSF when we were hired, and our personnel files,
19 we were probationary employees under OPM’s orders and interpretation of the law and regulations.

20 25. I received my official termination notice from NSF human resources via email at 2:56
21 PM, effective at the end of the business day.

22 26. My termination letter stated: “The Agency finds, based on your performance, that you
23 have not demonstrated that your further employment at the Agency would be in the public interest.”
24 A true and correct copy of my termination letter is attached hereto as Exhibit B.

25 27. Based on the statements made by NSF at the 10 AM meeting and discussions with
26 fellow employees, it is my understanding that all terminated probationary employees at NSF were
27 given the same boilerplate language about the cause of our terminations. At the meeting, Micah
28 Cheatham told us that NSF was given the option by OPM of terminating us due to performance or

1 due to conduct, and that NSF chose performance, not because it was true, but because it would allow
2 us to claim unemployment.

3 28. In total, nearly 170 employees were terminated out of roughly 1,500 at NSF.

4 29. On information and belief, at least one NSF employee who worked at an NSF research
5 station in Antarctica joined the Zoom meeting and learned that she was one of the employees being
6 terminated.

7 30. It is my understanding that at least 20 of the terminated employees had, like me, been
8 given prior documentation showing that they were no longer considered probationary employees.
9 Although the terminations were extremely abrupt for all of those of us who were fired on February
10 18, 2025, those of us who thought we had been permanently employed did not believe that our jobs
11 could be put at risk like this at all.

12 31. I knew that I would have one year of probationary employee status when I joined NSF,
13 but when I successfully completed that period with outstanding ratings, I believed that I had job
14 security as a permanent federal employee.

15 32. Many NSF employees are former professors who gave up tenured positions to work
16 for the public interest and the advancement of critical research across the country.

17 33. The suddenness and scope of these terminations make it extremely difficult for my
18 colleagues and me to find new jobs. Academic hiring is seasonal, and the fact that these unexpected
19 terminations occurred in the middle of that cycle means that immediate job opportunities are very
20 rare. Moreover, many of us are entering the job market at once due to these blanket terminations, and
21 are therefore competing for a limited number of jobs in our fields. Even where there are openings,
22 most are at the Assistant Professor level, further limiting the opportunities for senior scholars.

23 34. The termination of nearly 170 employees, including myself, also significantly reduces
24 NSF's capacity to fulfill its core mission of advancing U.S. science and security.

25 35. The fact that the abrupt terminations were made with less than one day's notice means
26 that the terminated employees had mere hours to provide crucial transition information before being
27 locked out of NSF systems. I was only provided a few hours between being notified of my
28 termination and being locked out of all the NSF IT systems in which to ensure that I had access to

1 necessary information about my benefits, while also trying to adequately transition my workload to
2 colleagues who were remaining at the agency.

3 36. Program Directors at NSF were already managing substantial responsibilities before
4 more than 10% of NSF employees were terminated at once with minimal notice. Program Directors
5 manage hundreds of ongoing awards, including communicating with principal investigators that have
6 awards and reviewing annual reports. Those who remain will need to take on additional workloads,
7 including just to determine what work was being done by those who were terminated, undermining
8 NSF's ability to provide effective and timely support for vital scientific research.

9 37. NSF also partners with other federal agencies and non-governmental organizations to
10 provide significant funding to its projects. On information and belief, some of the terminated
11 employees worked on these partnerships. The loss of employees who built those relationships and
12 concerns that outside funders have about NSF's stability going forward will threaten those sources of
13 funding for the agency. This will ultimately reduce the support available for scientists, researchers,
14 and students working in critical programs.

15 38. The blanket approach to these terminations also had disproportionate negative impacts
16 on specific programs that happened to rely on a higher proportion of more recent, probationary
17 employees. For example, at least two other Program Directors who were involved in the wildland fire
18 working group at NSF were terminated along with me. The loss of so many program directors will
19 delay any funding through that program that would have gone to scientists across the country and
20 across disciplines working to address the future risks associated with wildland fire, and could threaten
21 that project as a whole.

22
23 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States that the foregoing is true
24 and correct. Executed this 22nd day of February 2025 in Richmond, Virginia.

25
26 
27 Dr. Thomas Evans
28





EXHIBIT A

National Science Foundation
General Workforce (GWF) Performance Plan and Appraisal

Part 1. Employee Input *I have reviewed this plan and have been involved in its development.*

Employee Name (Last, First, Middle): Evans, Tom	Appraisal Pd. 4/1/2023 - 3/31/2024
Title: Program Director	Series/Plan/Grade: 0101 - AD - 04
Organization: Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences	
Plan Purpose: Annual	PD Number:
Reviewing Official's Signature: Electronically signed by [REDACTED] (Reviewing Official)	Date: 4/23/2023
Originally signed by [REDACTED] on 4/23/2023	
Rating Official's Signature: Electronically signed by [REDACTED] (Rating Official)	Date: 4/24/2023
Originally signed by [REDACTED] on 4/24/2023	
Employee's Signature: Electronically signed by EVANS, THOMAS P.	Date: 4/24/2023
Originally signed by THOMAS P. EVANS on 4/24/2023	

Part 2. Progress Review

Rating Official's Signature:  Electronically signed by [REDACTED] (Rating Official)	Date:  10/26/2023
Employee's Signature:  Electronically signed by EVANS, THOMAS P.	Date:  10/26/2023









Part 3. Rating

Summary Rating Levels:	<input type="checkbox"/> Unacceptable <input type="checkbox"/> Marginally Successful <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Successful <input type="checkbox"/> Exceeds Fully Successful <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Outstanding
Fully Successful: Refer to NSF Generic Performance Standards (GPS)	

Part 4. Derivation Formula and Calculation of Annual Summary Rating

Performance Element/Performance Element Group	Rating Level	Rating Value
Program Planning and Management *	Outstanding (O)	5
Programmatic and Scientific Communication *	Outstanding (O)	5
Professional Development *	Outstanding (O)	5
* Denotes Critical Element ^ Denotes Overridden Rating x Denotes PE not included in Rating Calculations		

Part 5. Rating Signatures

Reviewing Official's Signature:  Electronically signed by [REDACTED] (Reviewing Official)	Date:  4/26/2024
Rating Official's Signature:  Electronically signed by [REDACTED] (Rating Official)	Date:  4/26/2024
Employee's Signature:  Electronically signed by EVANS, THOMAS P.	Date:  4/29/2024
Employee's Comments:	
Performance Appraisal Certifier Signature:  Electronically signed by [REDACTED] (Performance Appraisal Certifier)	Date:  5/1/2024

Part 6. Instructions

Instructions are available in the "Resources" section.

Part 7. Performance Elements**Program Planning and Management**☒ **Critical****Strategic Alignment:**

Annual objectives related to this element will be set by the supervisor and communicated to the employee as work is assigned throughout the year. The employee's performance rating for this element will be based on the (a) degree to which he or she accomplishes these objectives and the (b) manner in which he or she goes about accomplishing these objectives. Descriptions of expectations at each level of performance are provided in the NSF Generic Performance Standards.

- Maintain the integrity and quality of the peer merit review process.
- Plan allocation of resources to maintain a healthy balance of support to meet program needs.
- Take action on all proposals in a timely manner.
- Prepare review analyses that are well-reasoned and well-documented to justify recommendation.
- Consider both merit review criteria in funding recommendations.
- Maintain an effective and efficient post-award evaluation process.
- Pursue goals of increasing diversity and broadening participation in selection of reviewers, panelists, and PIs.
- Ensure proposals comply with NSF policy and division practice, including consideration of plans for mentorship and data management and access.
- Work effectively and collaboratively with administrative staff in processing work and meeting deadlines.
- Secure co-review when the scope of a proposal requires broader engagement.
- Assess trends and opportunities in the field with assistance of advisory panel, scientific community, professional societies, committees of visitors, etc., and incorporate these, as appropriate, into program planning and development.
- Keep senior management informed of operations in the program.
- Promote and support excellence in science ethics.
- Perform other duties as assigned.

Fully Successful (FS):

Refer to NSF Generic Performance Standards (GPS)

Employee Element Self-Accomplishment Narrative:

Rating Official Element Narrative:

Tom's core programmatic work is as permanent lead of a well-coordinated team (with co-POs [REDACTED]) running the Human-Environment and Geographical Sciences (HEGS) Program. Tom completes the basic responsibilities of program management, recruiting panelists and ad-hoc reviewers, managing review panels, program budgeting, processing proposals, and coordinating with the other HEGS POs and program support staff on program actions, exceptionally well. Of note is that Tom has led the effort to deliver consistent pre-panel orientation for the program group sessions and well as 1-on-1 sessions as needed. He also continues to adopt the power of technology such as PanelSolver and RoboRA to ease the workflow burden of HEGS. Notable this past year is his effort to spearhead HEGS's volunteering to run a panel using the new Proposal Evaluation System (PES) that is to be the replacement for Fastlane. Tom led coordination with the PES team including orientation sessions, platform testing, and panelist training. The PES experience was quite positive with only minor obstacles – the HEGS team is looking forward to the full PES rollout and was pleased to be one (and the only SBE) program that contributed to the PES gamma test phase. It is very important to participate in the testing of new technologies at NSF and we are grateful that Tom volunteered and participated with HEGS to do so; feedback will be incorporated into the final version.

Tom continues to coordinate the effort to re-envision the HEGS senior and DDRI programs by reworking the solicitations to (1) clarify to the research community the types of scholarship that fall within the scope of the HEGS program; (2) encourage submissions to HEGS that are currently underrepresented (such as proposals from GIScientists); and (3) identify mechanisms to re-invent the DDRI program to better serve the community and to diversify the topical representation in submissions and awards. The need for HEGS program revisions has increased with the ending of the highly successful cross-directorate DISES program given the interest of those PIs to submit to HEGS via the newly imagined "SHINE" track.

As the lead of the program that links the social sciences with the physical sciences and engineering in SBE, Tom has become instrumental in providing SBE leadership and representation in environmentally oriented cross directorate programs. This work includes co-chairing the SBE-led CRISES program. Tom was instrumental in running the initial competition (planning and conference proposals) for this program together with co-chair [REDACTED] from SES under extreme time pressure. The development of the DCL and FAQs was done quickly, with the response impressive for such a new program. Over 150 concept outlines were submitted which had to be internally reviewed and managed by a volunteer Working Group, and 15 award recommendations processed during an already busy close-out season. It is due to Tom's leadership that the initial launch of CRISES was a success. Tom has continued to work with [REDACTED] to lead CRISES.v2, now enlarged with representation from other directorates.

Tom is also involved in other activities, widespread in their coordination with other directorates, where he is usually the sole SBE PO on many working groups. Through his thoughtful contributions and leadership, SBE perspectives are integrated in these efforts.

1. Tom joined [REDACTED] as co-chair of Sustainable Regional Systems Research Networks (SRS RNs) in early 2024. While [REDACTED] handles most of the day-to-day work, Tom has been engaged with key decision-making and outreach. In 23-24, the SRS work involved clearance of the program solicitation, FAQ and webinar; work will ramp up during the next reporting period.
1. Tom has long been involved as the SBE rep on the Wildland Fire working group, based in BIO. HEGS was primary or co-funder on about of the awards and SBE sciences have become a critical partner in the Wildland Fire program. Tom continues to work with the Wildland Fire working group towards a vision of a possible solicitation in FY25.
1. Tom served as one of several POs on the cross-directorate Dynamics of Integrated Socio-Environmental Systems (DISES) – supporting lead [REDACTED] in the administration of DISES in 2023 when SBE lead in the program's management.
1. Tom also serves on the Strengthening American Infrastructure (SAI) program working group.
1. He is also on the cross-directorate Clean Energy Technology working group and representing SBE.
1. He served on the directorate-less Advisory Committee on Environmental Research and Education (AC-ERE) work group ensuring the highlighting of SBE matters.

Along with [REDACTED] Tom filled in on the Graduate Research Fellowship Program including running a GRFP panel for geography/sociology in January 2024 on short notice for a SES PO who was unable to participate. This program, along with HEGS's DDRI program, is critical in the support of graduate students. A crucial new development toward the end of the reporting period is Tom's 50% detail to GEO-RISE to serve as founding co-chair of the new program, Confronting Hazards, Impacts and Risks for a Resilient Planet program (CHIRRP). This service is invaluable to SBE in its engagement with GEO on the development of this new program after the elimination of DISES and as SBE seeks to be involved in the Building a Resilient Planet budget roadmap.

Program Planning**and Management****Rating Levels:**

☐ Unacceptable (U) ☐ Minimally Successful (MS) ☐ Fully Successful (FS) ☐ Very Good (VG) ☒ Outstanding (O)

Programmatic and Scientific Communication☒ **Critical****Strategic Alignment:**

Annual objectives related to this element will be set by the supervisor and communicated to the employee as work is assigned throughout the year. The employee's performance rating for this element will be based on the (a) degree to which he or she accomplishes these objectives and the (b) manner in which he or she goes about accomplishing these objectives. Descriptions of expectations at each level of performance are provided in the NSF Generic Performance Standards.

- Respond to requests for information from Division Director and senior management in a timely fashion.
- Keep senior management informed of significant achievements in the field, as well as new trends and developments.
- Participate in outreach activities designed to encourage research, broaden participation, foster interdisciplinary collaborations, and enhance public engagement in science, as time and funds permit.
- Compose accurate and compelling highlights and work proactively to identify and help generate other media communications, so as to showcase supported research.
- Demonstrate and document links between supported research and broader impacts to society, including working with the scientific community to promote effective and appropriate linkages.
- Maintain accessibility for members of the community and ensure professional and effective interactions with them.
- Maintain effective communication with scientific community, potential PIs, and awardees via all appropriate means.
- Keep community informed about new funding opportunities, new policy and requirements, and new employment opportunities at NSF.
- Foster the involvement of BCS and other scientific communities in interdisciplinary research.
- Perform other duties as assigned

Fully Successful (FS):

Refer to NSF Generic Performance Standards (GPS)

Employee Element Self-Accomplishment Narrative:**Rating Official Element Narrative:**

Tom was very active in programmatic and scientific communication this past year. He conducted numerous outreach events for most of the many programs he represents – these include webinars, presentations at conferences/workshops, e.g., AAG, AGU (where he stepped in when the SBE rep was not able to attend at relatively short notice), Google Next, and meetings with graduate student classes at various institutions (virtually). As the Permanent lead in HEGS, Tom is frequently the coordinator of responses, and he initiated an innovative tracking process (pinned spreadsheet in Teams) to ensure timely replies to all PI inquiries and to fellow POs and staff about co-review and invitations to participate in lead agency and other initiatives to foster cross-directorate and international science.

**Programmatic and
Scientific
Communication
Rating Levels:**

☐ Unacceptable (U) ☐ Minimally Successful (MS) ☐ Fully Successful (FS) ☐ Very Good (VG) ☒ Outstanding (O)

Professional Development☒ **Critical****Strategic Alignment:**

Annual objectives related to this element will be set by the supervisor and communicated to the employee as work is assigned throughout the year. The employee's performance rating for this element will be based on the (a) degree to which he or she accomplishes these objectives and the (b) manner in which he or she goes about accomplishing these objectives. Descriptions of expectations at each level of performance are provided in the NSF Generic Performance Standards.

- Establish contacts and maintain active involvement in area of scientific expertise by participating in meetings, conferences, and undertaking other relevant activities.
- Actively keep colleagues at NSF aware of research and other professional activities.
- Keep abreast of current discoveries and innovations in field of scientific expertise.
- As funding and workload permit:
 - o Pursue personal research and disseminate results.
 - o Foster research expertise and professionalism in field of expertise through engagement and collaboration with colleagues and students.
 - o Undertake management development activities, including training courses as appropriate.
 - o Engage in other professional or scholarly activity pertinent to personal growth and organizational goals, particularly as the activity links program area and expertise to others within an interdisciplinary context.

Fully Successful (FS):

Refer to NSF Generic Performance Standards (GPS)

Employee Element Self-Accomplishment Narrative:**Rating Official Element Narrative:**

As Tom transitioned from VSEE rotator to perm PO, he wound down his lab group at the University of Arizona, although he retains a courtesy appt. However, he has a very active IR/D plan as he collaborates with a cross-institutional team of scholars with whom he has worked for the past 10+ years on climate adaptation research in Sub-Saharan Africa. A highlight is serving as Co-PI on a new \$2M award from the Department of Defense Minerva program (PI [REDACTED] at U California Santa Barbara) that extends the group's work on climate adaptation in Zambia and Kenya to drivers and impacts of inter-personal conflict. The first phase of this project runs from 2023-2026 with a second phase contingent upon adequate performance in phase I. Tom was co-author on 4 peer reviewed manuscripts published in 2023 (see list below). Tom's active research is incredibly relevant and informs the cross-directorate work he does at NSF.

Giroux, S., Kaminski, P., Waldman, K., Blekking, J., Evans, T., & Caylor, K. K. 2023. Smallholder social networks: Advice seeking and adaptation in rural Kenya. *Agricultural Systems*, 205, 103574.

Joshi, N., Gerlak, A. K., Hannah, C., Lopus, S., Krell, N., & Evans, T. 2023. Water insecurity, housing tenure, and the role of informal water services in Nairobi's slum settlements. *World Development*, 164, 106165.

Gatti, N., Cecil, M., Baylis, K., Estes, L., Blekking, J., Heckeley, T., Vergopolan, N. and Evans, T., 2023. Is closing the agricultural yield gap a "risky" endeavor? *Agricultural Systems*, 208, p.103657.

Cecil, M., Chilenga, A., Chisanga, C., Gatti, N., Krell, N., Vergopolan, N., Baylis, K., Caylor, K., Evans, T., Konar, M. and Sheffield, J., 2023. How much control do smallholder maize farmers have over yield? *Field Crops Research*, 301, p.109014.

Tom attended the American Association of Geographers meeting in Spring 2023 for outreach and IRD, and the Google Next conference in December 2023. The latter conference was an outreach trip but had unexpected professional development relevance in part because the community attending Google Next and associated culture was entirely different than that of a typical academic conference. The industry-focus of this event was an interesting perspective in the context of recent NSF efforts to promote use-inspired outcomes and intersections between basic science research and industry partnerships (SBE-TIP collaborations).

Professional

Development Rating ☐ Unacceptable (U) ☐ Minimally Successful (MS) ☐ Fully Successful (FS) ☐ Very Good (VG) ☒ Outstanding (O)
Levels:

Part 8. Summary Rating Narrative

Tom excelled in his first year as a permanent PO in BCS, having served as a VSEE rotator previously. He is solid in managing the HEGS program collaboratively, and his work in extra-programmatic assignment has increased significantly as he settles into being a key SBE PO on environmental cross-directorate activities, especially his leadership on the SBE led CRISES program. Tom's network of relationships across NSF is deepening, with his current detail in GEO solidifying connections there. Tom is a true team player, willing to participate in efforts large and small, and willing to step up where there is a need. He has done this while continuing substantial scholarly work, and this benefits SBE as he remains very well versed in current trends in human-environmental and environmental research. We look forward to Tom's continued growth as a permanent member of the scientific staff at NSF.

Part 9. Employee Self-Accomplishment Narrative**Program Planning and Management**

Tom serves as one of 2.5 Program Officers assigned to the Human-Environment and Geographical Sciences (HEGS) Program. Responsibilities with HEGS have included recruiting panelists, conducting review panels, program budgeting, developing review analyses, and coordinating with the other HEGS POs on program actions (e.g. co-review requests). A particular role has involved the conduct of pre-panel orientations (approximately 20 sessions counting group sessions and also numerous 1-on-1 sessions for panelists who have conflict with group slots). The three HEGS POs work well together and we find a way to keep HEGS on track one (or more) of us are tugged away for other priorities.

Tom continued to encourage evaluation and adoption of new NSF workflows in the past performance period. This included continued adoption of PanelSolver and RoboRA for HEGS program workflows.

More recently the HEGS program volunteered to run a panel using the new Proposal Evaluation System (PES) that is to be a replacement for Fastlane. Tom led the coordination with the PES team including orientation sessions, platform testing and panelist training. The PES experience was quite positive with only minor obstacles – the HEGS team is looking forward to the full PES rollout and was pleased to be one of the programs that contributed to the PES gamma test phase.

Tom has worked with [REDACTED] in re-envisioning the HEGS senior and DDRI programs. The HEGS team is currently revising our program solicitations with the following specific aims in mind: 1) clarifying to the research community the types of scholarship that fall within the scope of the HEGS program, 2) encouraging submissions to HEGS that are currently underrepresented (e.g. GISci) and 3) identifying mechanisms to re-invent the DDRI program and diversity of topics represented in submissions and awards. This process has involved careful consideration of the program scope and mechanics. The HEGS team looks forward to submitting revised program solicitations for review in FY24. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have been highly vested in this solicitation revision/strategic direction process and hopefully we can find a period in 2024 when we have enough bandwidth to proceed carefully with this process. If done too hastily there can be blowback from the PI community but we have had enough meetings at this point to proceed - in part this path is clearer now that the public announcement on the ending of DISES is soon to be released.

Programmatic and Scientific Communication

Tom has conducted numerous outreach events in the form of HEGS webinars, meetings with graduate student classes at various institutions (4 in 2023-2024 period) and presentations at conferences/workshops (AAG and Google Next in 2023-2024 period). Tom frequently is the HEGS program officer coordinating email responses to PIs but this is very much a team effort.

Tom promoted adoption of a tracking process (pinned spreadsheet in Teams) to ensure timely replies to PIs. Collaborative decisions include PI inquiries of fit for HEGS, deciding if HEGS should participate in different programmatic inquiries at SBE, and consideration of EOIs from programs like UKRI and IUCRC. The HEGS program officers have a fairly consistent take on most inquiries at this point – as the HEGS program officers have been working together for 1.5 years now it is common for the first PO who gets to a PI inquiry to respond without requiring input from the other 2 POs. But about 20% of our inquiries are less clear judgement calls (e.g. UKRI or IUCRC consideration, PI inquiries on topics at the edge of HEGS scope) in which case we use a tracking system to record positions from each of us. The tracking spreadsheet pinned in Teams has worked relatively well to solicit this input versus email where messages can slip down in inboxes.

Representation and Coordination

Tom's representation within SBE and outside SBE has ticked up considerably in the 2023-2024 period. Tom continued to participate as a member of several cross-directorate working groups. These include the Wildland Fire working group that saw the awarding of 16 planning proposals in 2023 – Tom was the managing PO for SBE on these awards and HEGS was primary or co-funder of 7 of the 16 awards. BIO supported 10 awards and GEO 7 awards. In other words, SBE was a critical partner in the Wildland Fire 2023 portfolio, particularly when considering the relative budgets of SBE vs. BIO & GEO. Tom continues to work with the Wildland Fire working group towards a vision of a possible solicitation in FY25. A less time consuming working group was the Clean Energy Technology working group and representing SBE at the NSF working group for the Advisory Committee on Environmental Research and Education (now handed off to [REDACTED] as of Feb 2024).

Tom serves as a program director with the Dynamics of Integrated Socio-Environmental Systems (DISES) and Strengthening American Infrastructure (SAI) programs. These programs did not involve an inordinate amount of leadership time as it is the PO lead that shoulders most of the burden [REDACTED] respectively). But Tom supported [REDACTED] in administration of DISES in the 2023 cycle and handled a portion of the award/decline decisions. Along with [REDACTED], Tom filled in on the Graduate Research Fellowship Program including running a GRFP panel for geography/sociology in January 2024 on short notice for a SES PO who was unable to participate.

A more significant allocation of time in the 2023-2024 performance period involved co-chairing the SBE Centers for Research and Innovation in Science, the Environment and Society (CRISES) with [REDACTED] (SES) and [REDACTED]. This involved managing the rollout of the CRISES DCL (planning and conference proposals), community outreach/webinars, coordination of the 12 member working group, management of concept outline review (150), review of full proposals (120) and processing awards (15). This was a big effort given the accelerated timetable for CRISES but the working group succeeded in getting all award and decline recommendations submitted before July closeout. The working group members really stepped up to make this timeline possible. Tom continues to work with [REDACTED] to stand up a 2nd round of CRISES DCL coordinating revision of the DCL with WG members and SBE leadership.

Tom joined [REDACTED] as co-chair of Sustainable Regional Systems Research Networks (SRS RNs) in early 2024. [REDACTED] handles a significant amount of the co-chair workload but Tom has been engaged at a higher level than anticipated in decision making and outreach (multiple meetings/week + email traffic). So far the SRS work has involved clearance of the program solicitation, FAQ and webinar – coordination with the larger working group will ramp up in April and review process of the \$15M proposals will start soon after the May 15 2024 deadline.

In March 2024 Tom started a detail with GEO to co-chair the GEO Confronting Hazards, Impacts and Risks for a Resilient Planet program (CHIRRP). This detail technically started March 10 2024 but the workload starting ticking up in February 2024.

Overall this cross-directorate work has been an increasingly significant time commitment but has been rewarding as it leverages Tom's research experience leading and collaborating with interdisciplinary teams. Tom's network of relationships at NSF is developing and growing stronger due to the engagement on the working groups noted above. This has involved learning how to strategically step in when there are opportunities to leverage SBE science in different cross-directorate initiatives constructively and collaboratively.

Professional Development

Tom wound down his lab group at the University of Arizona with his transition from VSEE to permanent program officer role in 2023. He continues to actively collaborate with a cross-institutional team of scholars with whom he has worked for the past 10+ years on climate adaptation research in Sub-Saharan Africa.

A highlight is serving as Co-PI on a new \$2M award from the Department of Defense Minerva program (PI [REDACTED] at U California Santa Barbara) that extends the group's work on climate adaptation in Zambia and Kenya to drivers and impacts of inter-personal conflict. The first phase of this project runs from 2023-2026 with a second phase contingent upon adequate performance in phase I. Tom was co-author on 4 peer reviewed manuscripts published in 2023.

Tom attended the American Association of Geographers meeting in Spring 2023 and the Google Next conference in December 2023. The latter conference was an outreach trip but had unexpected professional development relevance in part because the community attending Google Next and associated culture was entirely different than that of a typical academic conference. The industry-focus of this event was an interesting perspective in the context of recent NSF efforts to promote use-inspired outcomes and intersections between basic science research and industry partnerships.

Part 10. For Agency Use

EXHIBIT B



U.S. National Science Foundation

DATE: February 18, 2025

TO: Thomas P. Evans, Program Director
Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences

FROM: Starlisha Anderson, Acting Director
Division of Human Resource Management

SUBJECT: Termination of Excepted Service Appointment

On July 30, 2023, you were hired on an Excepted Service appointment as an Program Director, in Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences, at the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF).

The purpose of this memorandum is to notify you that your employment will be terminated effective at the end of the business day on February 18, 2025. The Agency finds, based on your performance, that you have not demonstrated that your further employment at the Agency would be in the public interest.

You may choose to resign in lieu of being terminated. This decision may impact your rights and benefits. If you wish to resign in lieu of being terminated, please notify benefits@nsf.gov before 11:59 pm EST today, February 18, 2025.

NSF Property Turn-In: You are required to turn in your PIV badge, laptop, and all other government property in your possession. If you are onsite today, you must turn in your government property to your directorate or office point of contact. If you are not onsite, a prepaid box will be mailed to your address of record which you are required to use to immediately return such property. Until this has been done, any indebtedness that you have to the government will be offset by your salary check and/or retirement funds. If you have personal property onsite, and you are not able to retrieve it today, a representative of your directorate or office will pack and mail it to your address of record.

If you disagree with this decision, you may contest it in accordance with one of the following procedures. You may only choose one of these options, outlined below; and, whichever filing occurs first, will be considered your choice.

- a. Option – Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) on the limited grounds set forth in 5 C.F.R. § 315.806. Any such appeal must be filed within 30 days of the effective date of this decision or 30 days after the date of your receipt of this decision, whichever is later. You should review MSPB regulations at 5 C.F.R. §§ 1201.14 and 1201.24 for instructions on how to file an electronic appeal and content requirements of the appeal,



U.S. National Science Foundation

respectively. For more information, please visit www.mspb.gov or contact your local MSPB regional or field office at: <https://www.mspb.gov/about/contact.htm>.

- b. Option – Equal Employment Opportunity Program (EEO), Office of Civil Rights (OCR): If you believe this termination is being taken in whole or in part because of discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, and/or reprisal for prior EEO activity, you may file a discrimination complaint within forty-five (45) days of the effective date of this action. Questions concerning the EEO process may be referred to:

National Science Foundation
Office of Civil Rights
2415 Eisenhower Ave
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone: (703) 292-8020
Email: eeo@nsf.gov

- c. Option – Office of Special Counsel (OSC): If you believe this action is in retaliation for your making protected whistleblowing disclosures, you may also seek corrective action from the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC). If you do so, your appeal may be limited to whether the Agency took one or more covered personnel actions against you in retaliation for making protected whistleblowing disclosures, and you will not be able to challenge the decision on other bases in that action. To seek corrective action from the OSC, you may submit your complaint online. More information on or about filing a complaint with the OSC may be found at <https://osc.gov/Pages/File-Complaint.aspx>. As an alternative, you may communicate in writing to the following address:

Complaints Examining Unit
U.S. Office of Special Counsel
1730 M Street, N.W., Suite 218
Washington, DC 20036-4505

We appreciate your service to the Agency and wish you the greatest success in your future endeavors. If you have any procedural questions regarding this action, you may contact the Workforce Relations Branch at workforcerelations@nsf.gov.

Starlisha Anderson
Acting Director, Division of Human Resource Management
Office of Information and Resource Management